



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JULY 19, 2010

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Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., prevented from presenting oral State of Navajo Nation address; no reason for slight given

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., was denied the opportunity to give his quarterly state of the Navajo Nation address today when the Navajo Nation Council voted against his presenting it, although it earlier adopted an agenda with the speech on it.

The President was seated and ready to present the address when the vote was taken and he was excused. The Council accepted a written report only. No official reason for the action was given.

“This happens with advanced planning,” said OPVP Chief of Staff Patrick Sandoval. “This doesn’t happen spontaneously.”

The address was to be carried live on the Navajo radio station, KTNN. In the past, some Council delegates complained when their questioning of the President following his speech was not carried by the radio station.

Coincidentally, about 10 Arizona Democratic candidates for various state and federal positions, who had traveled to Window Rock to introduce themselves, were in the Council chamber to hear the President’s address. Afterward, about half met with the President in his office and the rest joined him for lunch at a local restaurant.

In his written report, President Shirley again warned the Council that with fewer revenues coming in, the curtailment of services and the possibility of employee layoffs in the next fiscal year could result.

“Operating with fewer funds will have a direct impact on the Nation and once again raises serious concerns about our ability to continue essential governmental operations in the next fiscal year without personnel layoffs or curtailment of services,” the President wrote.

The address began with an acknowledgment of the loss of Army Paratrooper and Specialist Christopher Moon, 20, who died of wounds sustained during combat service

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in Afghanistan on July 6.

“Specialist Moon grew up in Tucson, gave up a baseball scholarship to the University of Arizona to join the Army in February 2008, and excelled at everything he did,” the President wrote. “He was admired and beloved by everyone who knew him, and at such a young age was already highly decorated for his bravery and military achievements. He gave his life to protect us all, to defend freedom, to do what he strongly believed in, and he lived a life of great honor.”

In addressing the tribe’s budget problems, the President wrote that decisions of the Budget and Finance Committee have left the government with nearly \$16 million less than in Fiscal Year 2010. A whiteboard in the Council chamber this morning showed the balance in the general fund as negative \$22 million.

Consequently, the Executive Branch must plan for \$11 million less than was received in Fiscal Year 2010, the Legislative Branch must plan for \$4.4 million less and the Judicial Branch must plan for approximately \$600,000 less, the President wrote.

Because of that, the Executive Branch implemented 10 percent cuts across the board, and the President directed all programs to prioritize direct services above all other spending.

"These deep cuts will undoubtedly affect services, and I will do everything possible to continue to provide direct services to our Navajo people whose needs can be expected to become greater," he wrote. "Failing to address our government's current and future budget situation in a rational and reasonable way will interrupt service delivery, as well as result in possible employee layoffs."

On the positive side, the President reported that the Navajo Nation will receive \$521.7 million in ARRA funding. The awards include money for the NAHASDA Block Grant, Indian Reservation Roads, the Weatherization Program, and for BIA Road and Bridge Maintenance.

The Nation also received funding for BIA School Improvement and Repairs, the Workforce Development and Dislocated Workers Program, and safe drinking water and wastewater project funds, he said.

He wrote that he has established a Navajo Nation ARRA Office, developed a budget for it, and is in the process of seeking qualified personnel to oversee and monitor all stimulus funding activities.

The President also reported that on June 24 he signed documents for a \$60 million loan from KeyBank to be used to build new judicial and correctional facilities in Crownpoint and Tuba City.

The loan is the first to comply exclusively with tribal laws and subject to tribal jurisdiction, in full recognition of the Navajo Nation's sovereignty, he wrote. KeyBank agreed that disputes arising from the agreement would be heard in Navajo courts according to Navajo laws, rather than in state or federal court, he wrote.

The President also reported that the Department of Diné Education has proposed the establishment of a State Education Agency that would enable the Nation to govern and regulate all tribally-controlled schools.

He said about 86,000 students are enrolled in 243 schools within or near the Navajo Nation. However, based on the last three years of education assessments, nearly 64 percent of these schools have not met the Adequate Yearly Progress criteria mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act, also referred to as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

"This is an alarming and unacceptable statistic," the President wrote. "We must not stand by to allow this sort of noncompliance to continue. Although I understand that the criteria and measurement tools used to evaluate progress are under review, it is imperative that we do whatever is necessary to ensure that our children receive a quality education so they can become successful."

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